

What is Claimed is:

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1. A mudmat foundation for supporting an item of subsea equipment on the sea floor, the mudmat foundation comprising:

5 a mudmat on which the item of subsea equipment may be supported; and

a plurality of legs which are pivotably connected to and depend downwardly from the mudmat;

wherein the legs are free to pivot outwardly relative to the mudmat upon insertion of the legs into the sea floor.

10 2. The mudmat foundation of claim 1, wherein each leg comprises an elongated post having an upper end that is pivotably connected to the mudmat along a respective pivot axis.

3. The mudmat foundation of claim 2, wherein each leg further comprises at least one blade which is connected to the post.

15 4. The mudmat foundation of claim 3, wherein the blade comprises a face which is positioned generally parallel to the pivot axis.

5. The mudmat foundation of claim 4, wherein the face is also positioned at an acute angle relative to the longitudinal axis of the post.

20 6. The mudmat foundation of claim 5, wherein the face is positioned at an angle of between approximately 10° and 30° relative to the longitudinal axis of the post.

7. The mudmat foundation of claim 2, further comprising a plurality of padeyes which are attached to the mudmat and means for pivotably connecting the upper end of each post to a corresponding padeye.

8. The mudmat foundation of claim 7, wherein the connecting means
5 comprises a pin or bolt.

9. The mudmat foundation of claim 8, wherein the pin or bolt is removable.

10. The mudmat foundation of claim 1, further comprising means for limiting the degree to which the legs may pivot.

10 11. The mudmat foundation of claim 10, wherein the limiting means comprises at least one cable which engages the legs.

12. The mudmat foundation of claim 11, wherein the limiting means comprises a plurality of cables which each engage the legs.

13. The mudmat foundation of claim 12, wherein each cable is longer
15 than an adjacent cable closer to the mudmat.

14. The mudmat foundation of claim 13, wherein each cable is threaded through a corresponding hole in each of the legs.

15. The mudmat foundation of claim 1, further comprising a flexible cover which is attached to the legs and which is expandable upon the outward
20 pivoting of the legs.

16. The mudmat foundation of claim 15, wherein the cover is water permeable.

17. A mudmat foundation for supporting an item of subsea equipment on the sea floor, the mudmat foundation comprising:

a mudmat on which the item of subsea equipment may be supported;

5 a plurality of legs;

means for pivotably connecting an upper end of each leg to the mudmat;

wherein the legs are free to pivot outwardly relative to the mudmat upon insertion of the legs into the sea floor; and

10 means for limiting the degree to which the legs may pivot.

18. The mudmat foundation of claim 17, wherein the limiting means comprises a number of cables which each engage the legs.

19. The mudmat foundation of claim 18, further comprising a flexible cover which is attached to at least one of the cables or the legs and which is
15 expandable upon the outward pivoting of the legs.

20. The mudmat foundation of claim 19, wherein the cover is water permeable.